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ABSTRACT

Language can both reflect and shape the way people are treated in today's society. It can be used to open doors when it is gender inclusive, or to create barriers when it is not. The goal of this booklet is to encourage gender-inclusive language. Bias-free language is effective language. A number of studies demonstrate that an audience is more likely to "get the message," and to remember information, when inclusive language is used. This guide can help eliminate gender bias in writing, speech, and images. It is not meant to be a complete treatment of the subject, but rather a practical resource. The chapters are: (1) The Language Barrier: An Introduction to the "why" of inclusive language; (2) It's a Matter of Clarity: Reasons for, arguments against, inclusive language; (3) Sticky Wickets, and How to Avoid Them: Some advice on the "rules" of inclusive language; (4) Words to the Wise: A glossary; (5) Language on the Move; (6) Women Speak up About Sex-Biased Language; (7) Cracking Down on Bias: Insiders share their strategies; (8) Word Buffs, Take Note; and (9) Suggested Reading, a 12-item annotated bibliography. (JBJ)

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ED 391 130

WORDS THAT COUNT

WOMEN

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PREFACE

to the Second Edition of *Words that Count Women Out/In*

Language can both reflect and shape the way people are treated in our society. It can be used to open doors when it is gender inclusive, or to create barriers when it is not.

The Ontario Women's Directorate assists the government to achieve its commitment to the economic, legal and social equality of women in Ontario. Encouraging gender-inclusive language is part of this effort. Bias-free language is effective language. A number of studies demonstrate that an audience is more likely to "get the message," and to remember information, when inclusive language is used.

Over the last few years, the Women's Directorate has received many requests for information about gender-inclusive language. *Words That Count Women Out/In* was produced in response to this demand, and was conceived with professional communicators in mind. Demand for the booklet was extremely high and the first printing was quickly distributed. People from all walks of life asked for copies -- evidence of the strong current interest in this topic. Large quantities were ordered by employers, educators, media and government offices for use in their workplace.

In the first edition, we asked people to share their creative solutions to "counting women in." Our booklet generated a lot of feedback, enthusiasm, controversy and helpful criticism. We've incorporated a number of these suggestions into this second edition.

This is a popular guide to eliminating gender bias in writing, speech and images. It is not meant to be a complete

treatment of the subject, but rather a practical resource. Our goal is to increase awareness of the subject and to encourage readers to consider the value of using inclusive language in speaking and writing. A list of further reading is provided at the end of the booklet. Please feel free to photocopy any of the material in our guide to share with your colleagues or friends.

We are interested in your experiences with inclusive language, and your comments on the publication.

To share your ideas, write to:

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THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

An introduction to the "why" of inclusive language

"O Canada, our home and native land
True patriot love in all thy sons command..."

Picture two children singing these lyrics-- a girl and a boy. Think of the images formed in their minds. The boy sees countless males like himself, all standing on guard for their country. He feels fully part of the patriotic fervor, a true son of Canada.

The girl is not so lucky. Since our national anthem says nothing about daughters, she can't help wondering whether it applies to her. Can only men be patriots?

"O Canada," the symbol of our democratic spirit, excludes half the population. The single word "sons" tells women they do not belong. You could argue that other words express the anthem's point-- words like "glowing hearts" or "true north strong and free." You could even argue that "sons" is just a synonym for "people"-- and *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, published by Merriam-Webster Inc., 1991 would back you up. One meaning it cites is "a person closely associated with or deriving from a formative agent (as a nation, school or race)."

But words create images more powerful than any definition. If you don't choose your words with care, they may send a message you never intended: in this case, that it's a man's world.

Words most of us use daily do exactly that. "Weatherman" suggests that all weather reporters are male. "Frenchmen" implies that the French are all male. "Mankind" portrays

maleness as the norm for our species. You'd think every species was male, the way the lion at the zoo, the dinosaur in the museum and the friendly mutt in the local park are all referred to as "he."

IT'S A MATTER OF CLARITY

Reasons for, arguments against, inclusive language

All speakers and writers share the same goal: clear communication. Male-biased words don't meet the challenge. They hark back to a world that no longer exists, a world with no place for women's aspirations. They cause needless doubts and needless offense. Unless you learn to spot them and change them, they'll distract attention from your point.

It's easier than it sounds. Take "O Canada." If "all thy sons" were changed to "all our hearts," the lyrics would still trip off the tongue -- but they would speak to everyone, not just men.

That's the guiding principle of bias-free language: it includes the whole audience. It's not just the fair way to communicate. Now that women make space flights and hold cabinet posts, it's the only way that works for everyone.

This common sense idea has met fierce resistance, and no wonder. Today's inclusive language breaks rules we've all followed since grade school. But the case against change doesn't hold up to scrutiny. Take a close look at the following arguments:

"What difference does it make?"

Study after study shows that biased language is fuzzy language. When they read the words "man" or "he," people of all ages tend to picture males.

Biased language distorts perceptions. In a classic 1974 study, junior high school students were asked to draw the

activities of prehistoric people. One group received instructions about "early man." The other followed gender-neutral instructions. Both groups drew more males than females. But when instructions referred to "people" and "humans," the number of female figures increased.

Biased language can dampen young women's aspirations. A 1983 study found women less likely to consider a career in psychology when the career description used the male pronoun. As if all this weren't reason enough to watch our language, getting rid of bias clearly motivates women. In a 1984 study, female students recalled information better when the researchers used sex-neutral terms.

"You can't rewrite the English language."

No one is rewriting the language. Rather, the language is evolving to keep pace with the times, as it has done since the days of the troubadours. The Simpsons don't speak like the Capulets and the Montagues. And just look at the new words that have flooded dictionaries since the '60s: preppy, tofu, quark, hacker, sunblocker, flextime... the list goes on. These words exist because they meet a need.

Similarly, other words have gone the way of spats and corsets. You hardly ever hear the term "authoress" these days, and "doctoress" is all but forgotten. Yet as recently as the '20s, famed lexicographer H.W. Fowler defended "singeress" and "teacheress." Fowler worried that without specialized terms to distinguish them, upstart professional women might be confused with the real experts -- their male counterparts.

"Those new words are ridiculous."

Sceptics heap scorn on "chair," a frontrunner to replace the biased "chairman." A chair, they insist, is a piece of furniture, not a person. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates 1659 as the first use of "chair" in its contested sense. "Chairman" entered

the language just four years earlier.

Granted, "manhole cover" may sound more natural to many of us than the non-biased alternative, "sewer cover." But that's just because the term is new. To our children's generation, "manhole cover" will likely seem downright quaint.

Wags have dreamed up some undeniably ridiculous words in an effort to lampoon inclusive language. By replacing "man" with "person" wherever it appears, they've devised such clunkers as "personipulate" and "Personitoba." In fact, "manipulate" and "manacle" are here to stay because their root is not "man" but the Latin for hand, manus.

"What you call biased, I call colorful."

No question, some stereotypes exude color. Take "trollop," "shrew" and "biddy." These words appeal for the images they spark -- images that put women down. Sometimes, as with "oaf" and "gigolo," it's men who are belittled in the name of lively writing. Either way, the result is the same -- negative stereotyping.

There's another way to make your prose leap off the page. Why not describe the action rather than the person? Nouns label people; verbs pack as much pictorial clout as nouns, with less potential for put-downs. "Tussle," "plod," "lurch," "slither"... verbs like these can set scenes for your reader. Countless others are as close as your thesaurus.

STICKY WICKETS, and HOW to AVOID THEM

Some advice on the "rules" of inclusive language

Changing lifelong habits calls for patience at first, but don't be surprised if your writing improves. Many biased expressions are clichés. Without them, you'll stretch your creativity.

Not that you need to be a literary whiz. Once you figure out where the danger zones are, dodging them will become second nature. A few simple ground rules will get you started.

The Pronoun Puzzle

Until recently, most people didn't see anything wrong with using the generic "he" ("everyone should bring his lunch") to refer to both men and women. Women's growing disagreement has inspired some pretty cumbersome proposals for a third person singular pronoun of indeterminate sex. "S/he" makes most readers wince; "tey" never caught on at all. "He or she" will do in a pinch, but grates with constant repetition.

What's a frustrated writer to do? Try one of three tricks:

- **Make the sentence plural.**
  In the following sentence, all you'll lose is one word -- and that's a gain for your reader. The leaner your prose, the sharper your point. For example, change:

> "Becoming a doctor can be a lonely experience, one that takes a large toll not only on the young doctor, but also on his patients."

to

> "Becoming a doctor can be a lonely experience, one that takes a large toll not only on young doctors but also on patients."
>
> -- *The New York Times Book Review*

- **Change "his" to "the."**
  It's a simple way to fix this verbal gaffe:

> "The member will promptly disclose to his [the] client any interest in a business which may affect the client."
>
> -- Code of ethics, The American Society of Home Inspectors

Better yet, ask yourself if you can shorten the sentence. In the above example, it's understood that the member is disclosing to the client. Why not amend the sentence to read:

> "The member will promptly disclose any interest in a business which may affect the client."

- **Use "they" as a singular pronoun.**
  We know, we know -- "Everyone for themselves" would make your English teacher cringe. You're wise to avoid it in a speech to teachers or your company's annual report, but when you want an informal, colloquial style, the singular "they" could be your best bet.

  This usage was considered correct until the mid-nineteenth century. As the closest thing we have to an indeterminate singular pronoun, "they" could be poised for a comeback. If it was good enough for Jane Austen and William Shakespeare, it should be good enough for the Rotary Club.

- **Alternate between "she" and "he."**
  Whether you're referring to university students, employees or kids at summer camp, this tactic beats constant repetition of "he or she." Just watch out for sex-typed examples. The employee dashing to the daycare centre is not necessarily "she." The youngster in tears over a classmate's teasing might be "he."

- **In a pinch . . .**
  Change "he" to "one" or "the individual," or use the passive voice. But both techniques, while often recommended, tend to make for stilted writing. Once you get the hang of the others, you shouldn't need them.

One Sex Fits All?

> "Some entomologists consider insects to be man's chief competitor, mainly because insects and man both utilize the same things."
>
> -- "Entomology in Canada: Career Opportunities"

Synonyms for "man" abound (see "Words to the Wise"), so this verbal gaffe is easily fixed. Consider just one possible revision:

> "Some entomologists consider insects to be humans' chief competitor, mainly because insects utilize the same things we do."

You may wonder why "humans" should be preferable to "man." Similar as the two words appear, they come from different roots-- "humans" from the Latin "homo" and "man" from the Old English "mann." Both roots originally meant "human being," but "man" developed its gender-specific connotation as long ago as the 10th century.

"Man" also turns up as a verb. Here's an example from the front page of *The Globe and Mail*:

> "We have... found... a declining confidence in our system of parliamentary democracy, and in the politicians who man the system."
>
> -- pollster Michael Adams

Is it just male politicians who have fallen out of favor? If not, then why not change "man" to "run"?

Type-casting

No matter what a woman achieves outside the home, her domestic talents attract constant scrutiny. When astronaut Dr. Roberta Bondar made her 1992 space flight, *The Toronto Star* ran this front-page headline:

> "Canadian in space does 'housework' "
> "Bondar spends hour tidying up shuttle"

A highly skilled physician and scientist, Dr. Bondar was spending no more time on "housework" than her male colleagues on the shuttle. Her efforts really focused on scientific experiments -- and had she been male, the headline writer would undoubtedly have said so.

The *Star* had trivialized a Canadian hero, and readers of both sexes were outraged. Within a day, more than 150 calls had bombarded the paper. Not for years had it faced such fury.

We don't hear much about Eric Lindros' cooking, or how much time Brian Mulroney spends with his kids. But let a woman step into the spotlight, and reporters suddenly wonder about her cooking schedule and her childcare arrangements. They exclaim over her skill at balancing work and family, as if to say, "Don't worry, guys, she's still a normal woman at heart." When her children grow up, she's still not home free. *People* magazine recently described a female biographer as "a spunky mother of four and grandmother of six."

If you've ever introduced a female speaker, you may have made the same blunder. We suggest this guideline: don't mention a woman's domestic life unless you would make the same comment of a man in her position.

One more word of advice: don't assume that only women run homes. That's the message implied in this sentence from a *Globe and Mail* article on marketing:

> "The dinner plates that the German hausfrau and the English housewife deemed acceptable, caused French women to laugh in disbelief."

Who says that only women were laughing? A few simple changes make the sentence more accurate -- and concise:

> "The dinner plates that the Germans and the English deemed acceptable caused the French to laugh in disbelief."

The Beauty Factor

> "She's so fresh-faced, so blue-eyed, so ruby-lipped, so 12-car-pile-up gorgeous, 5'5" and 114 pounds of peacekeeping missile."
>
> -- *Sports Illustrated* on figure skater Katerina Witt

Women's looks, like their homemaking, garner needless attention. A poet is praised for her "charm," an athlete for "moving like a model." Even the dignified London *Sunday Times* referred to the "overt, flaunting sexuality" of Canada's Kim Campbell. Is this how we generally talk about male politicians?

A Canadian magazine once published an article by a woman on the Toronto Blue Jays -- more specifically, on watching their bottoms under those tight uniforms. She speculated at length on which Blue Jay cut the cutest figure while at bat. In short, she wrote about men the way men tend to write about women. The response, however, was different. Angry letters

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accused the magazine of trivializing baseball.

Two themes stand out in irrelevant descriptions of women. One is sexuality, the other fragility. Here's an example of woman-as-rosebud prose:

> "She is a young, elegant woman with the pert appeal of a gamine. But her fragile good looks contradict the power she wields in the fiercely competitive fashion world."
>
> -- *Flare* on Fairweather president Lynn Posluns

"Pert" and "gamine," words only applied to women, shrink the executive's stature. "See how tiny she is," the passage seems to say. "She's not one of those power-hungry women. She wouldn't hurt a fly." Equally belittling -- to all women, not just Posluns-- is the presumed opposition between power and good looks. Why shouldn't female presidents look good? Does power turn women into drab, grim-faced martinets?

As with childcare arrangements, so with looks: if you wouldn't comment on a man's, then don't comment on a woman's.

Backhanded Compliments

At a high school commencement ceremony, a teacher hands a male graduate his award. "This fine young man is an inspiration to his classmates," she declares. Then the teacher honors his female classmate. She is called "a spunky little lady, a joy to us all."

Which prizewinner sounds more impressive? The male graduate -- no contest. "Inspiration" connotes action and leadership, while "joy to us all" connotes the supposedly feminine virtues of kindness and good humor.

As for "little lady," you don't hear males described as "little men." Next time you write a job reference for a woman, watch the words you choose. Are they the ones you'd select for a man

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with the same skills? Or are they words used only of women -- like "irrepressible" instead of "dauntless," "perky" instead of "energetic," "spunky" instead of "determined"?

Perhaps the most backhanded compliment of all is comparing a woman to men -- as in "She thinks like a man." Intellectual rigor is not a male trait -- and neither is guts.

The Parallelism Principle

"Lyn Goes After Rae"

-- *The Toronto Sun*

What's wrong with this headline? It denies a woman, Ontario Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, the same respect it gives a man, Premier Bob Rae. Most news media identify adults by their last names. This practice should apply to men and women alike.

To eliminate the bias, just make the headline parallel: either

"Lyn Goes After Bob" or "McLeod Goes After Rae."

Fair's fair. The same principle applies in daily life. If you are addressing men as "Dr." or "Professor," be just as formal with the women in the group. Those who have no titles deserve the courtesy of "Ms." And never call a woman by her first name unless you expect her to use yours.

Parallelism also means that men shouldn't always go first. Vary your style with phrases like "she and he," "hers and his," "women and men."

Women Writers, Male Nurses: Does It Matter?

Have you ever read an article that identifies an expert as a "woman doctor"? Or heard that someone was treated by a "male nurse"? Many references to gender serve no useful purpose, because they put the emphasis on personal characteristics rather than occupational knowledge and skills.

Sometimes both sexes bear the damage. For instance, the term "male secretary" implies that secretarial work is always done by women. More often, though, it's only women who are belittled. No one ever calls Mordecai Richler "one of our greatest male writers." But Alice Munro can be labelled "one of our greatest woman writers," as if her work couldn't stand comparison with men's. Don't mention gender unless it is key to understanding the message, as in this headline from *The Globe and Mail:*

"Male secretary ruled sexism victim"

Ladies' Day Is Over

"Ladies' dresses," "ladies' night," "ladies and escorts," "the lady next door."

The word "lady" may have fallen from favor, but it still turns up in a multitude of contexts. Only two meet the standards of the '90s. When men are "gentlemen" or "lords," then women can be "ladies."

Many people wonder what's wrong with calling women "ladies." To them, the word "lady" implies perfect manners, elegance and refinement -- all positive traits. The catch is that they constitute a confining female stereotype.

Our society does not expect these qualities of men, but demands them of women. "Lady" harks back to the rules that every daughter used to learn from her mother: "A lady always wears gloves," "A lady never wears white after Labor Day."

Besides, "lady," unlike gentleman, also has some downright negative meanings. A "lady of the evening" is a prostitute. "Little old lady" conjures images of childish helplessness.

To address an adult as "young lady" or "little lady" is to condescend to her. And that's no way to treat a woman.

What's Wrong with This Picture?

Your speech may be a model of gender-neutrality, but if your pictures show women in stereotyped roles, they'll undermine your message. Make sure the images you choose pass the following tests:

- **They include women.** Your company's technicians may well be a mostly male group. It's likely to stay that way unless you photograph the woman on the team.

- **They give women and men equal prominence.** If you feature men in full-page color shots, don't tuck small, black-and-whites of women in the corner. If captions identify men by name, women deserve equal treatment.

- **They don't turn women into sex objects.** In a *Maclean's* photographic feature on outstanding Canadians, athlete Silken Laumann appeared in a slinky cocktail dress with a pair of oars at her side. The men in the story wore their normal working garb.

Letter Perfect

If your letter addressed "Dear Sir" ends up on the desk of a vice-president who's a woman, you've committed a major business blunder. In fact, almost every letter that leaves your desk makes a statement about gender. Here's how to keep in step with the times:

- Don't be too quick to assume that you're writing to a man. "R. L. Jones" could be a woman who detests being addressed as "Mr." The gender-neutral salutation is "Dear R. L. Jones."

- How to avoid the "Dear Sir" dilemma? "Dear Sir or Madam" (or "Dear Madam or Sir") is a time-honoured formal solution. Address by title or role such as "Dear Managing Director," "Dear Customer," has become increasingly acceptable. Better still, do some research with the telephone or a directory, and find out the name of the person you want to reach.

- Use Ms. salutations instead of Mrs. or Miss. Make exceptions only for women who sign themselves Mrs. or Miss. (Please note -- although "Ms." isn't an abbreviation, it's now customary to punctuate the term.) Always use a woman's professional title (Judge, Professor) in situations where you would use one for a man.

- The same rule applies when writing to a man and woman couple: avoid "Mr. and Mrs." salutations unless the couple have indicated a preference for this address. If a woman has kept her birth name, the correct form might be "Dear Margaret Anderson and David Hodges." (Alphabetical order determines which name comes first.)

- If the woman has a professional title, you might write "Dear Mr. De Marco and Dr. Khan." In any case, today's wives are not extensions of their husbands. "Dear Nancy and Tom Cohen" is preferable to "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Tom Cohen."

- Keep your closing simple. Don't sign yourself "Ms." or "Mr." unless you use your initials or have a gender-neutral first name, such as Terry or Chris.

WORDS TO THE WISE: A Glossary

The Work World

Inclusive job titles welcome both women and men to a variety of occupations, and help organizations maximize their "people power." Unless there's a specific reason otherwise (like an article profiling women in traditionally male occupations) keep the emphasis on the job, not the gender. Some terms are in transition -- "actress" to "actor," "ballerina" to "ballet dancer" -- while others, like "police officer," are already well-established.

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
actress	actor
ad man, advertising man	advertising (rep)resentative, advertising manager
airman, aviatrix	pilot, aviator, flyer
alderman	municipal councillor
anchorman	anchor, newscaster, announcer
assemblyman (manufacturing)	assembler
assemblyman (politics)	assembly member, legislator
ballerina	ballet dancer
barmaid, barman	bartender
bellboy, bellman	bellhop
busboy	busser

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
businessman	business person, business executive, professional, entrepreneur
cabin boy	cabin attendant
call girl	prostitute
career girl, woman	professional, manager, executive
cameraman, cameramen	camera operator, camera crew
cleaning lady	cleaner
clergyman	cleric, member of the clergy
comedienne	comedian, comic
concertmaster	first violinist, concert leader, concert director
cowboy, cowgirl	cowhand, ranch hand, wrangler
craftsman	artisan
delivery boy	courier, messenger
dockman	dockhand, dockworker
doorman	doorkeeper, porter
draftsman	draftsperson, drafting technician
engineman	engine operator
fireman	firefighter
fisherman, fishermen	fisher, fishing crew
ferryman	ferry operator
foreman	supervisor
frogman	diver, underwater technician
gasman	gas fitter, gas pipe installer, gas pipe repairer

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
girl Friday	assistant, "gofer," person Friday
harbor master	harbor chief
insurance man	insurance agent
journeyman	trade worker
landlady, landlord	proprietor, householder, building manager
lineman	lineworker, line installer
longshoreman	dockhand, shorehand
mailman	letter carrier, mail carrier
meter maid (traffic)	parking constable
meter man (utilities)	meter reader
newsman	journalist, reporter, newshound
paperboy	paper carrier
patrolman	patrol officer
policeman, policewoman	police officer
poetess	poet
quarryman	quarrier, quarry worker
repairman	repairer, technician
saleslady, salesman	sales clerk, sales agent, sales (rep)resentative
seamstress	tailor, dressmaker, alterationist, sewer
serviceman	service (rep)resentative, repairer, technician
sideman	side-player, backup musician, member of the band
steward, stewardess	flight attendant

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Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
taxman	tax collector
union man	unionist, union member, union organizer
waitress	waiter, server
watchman	guard, security guard
weatherman	weather reporter, meteorologist
workman	worker

The World of Play

Interestingly, many sports and recreation terms are already gender-inclusive (batter, goalie, hiker, gymnast, swimmer, to name just a few). New words are evolving (and old ones are being revived) to reflect women's participation in a range of leisure activities.

boatsman	boater
defenseman	defense
fisherman	fisher, angler
gamesman	gamester, games buff
handyman	do-it-yourselfer
horseman, horsewoman	rider
linksman	golfer
outdoorsman	naturalist, nature lover, nature buff
rifleman, marksman	sharpshooter, crack shot
sportsman	athlete, sports buff, sports enthusiast
sportsmanlike	sporting, fair, team spirited

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Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
sportsmanship	fair play
yachtsman	yachter, yacht owner, sailor

Roles People Play

Roles and relationships are in transition, and so is the language used to describe them. Terms used informally may not be appropriate in a public setting. We might have a relationship with a "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" (or go out for the evening with "the girls" or "the boys") but terms like "partner" (or "friends") are more appropriate in a media, business, or professional context.

alumni	graduates, alumni(ae) or alumnae(i)
alumnus	graduate
bachelor (degree)	baccalaureate, undergraduate degree
benefactress	benefactor
boyfriend, girlfriend	partner
boys in blue	police force
chairman, chairwoman	chair, chairperson, head, co-ordinator
coed	student
committee man, committee woman	committee member
corporate wife	corporate spouse
faculty wife	faculty spouse
freshman	first-year student
front man	front, figurehead
hatchet man	terminator, assassin

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
henchman	sidekick, lackey, right-hand
heiress	heir
heroine	hero, protagonist
hostess	host
housewife, househusband	homemaker
layman	layperson, amateur
middleman	go-between, mediator, intermediary
man and wife	husband and wife, wife and husband
ombudsman	complaints investigator, advocate, troubleshooter, ombudsperson
self-made man	self-made person, entrepreneur
spokesman	spokesperson, representative

The Human Family

Generic use of the word "man" may backfire, and have the reverse effect on your audience. Ironically, a politician calling for the "unity of mankind" will be excluding half the populace!

brotherhood	kinship, community, comradeship
common man	common person, average person, person in the street
countryman	compatriot
distaff side	avoid

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
early man	early people, prehistoric people
fair sex, weaker sex	avoid
fatherland	country of origin, homeland
fellowship	camaraderie, friendship, conviviality
forefathers	ancestors, forebears
fraternal	warm, intimate
fraternal organization	club, social club, society
Frenchmen	the French
man, mankind	humankind, humanity, our species, humans
modern man	modern society, people today
mother tongue	first language
rise of man	rise of civilization
sons of God	children of God
thinking man	thinking person, thinker, intellectual
working woman, working man	wage earner, taxpayer

Stereotypes

Women aren't necessarily nurturing or intuitive; and men aren't necessarily rational or rugged. But some stereotypes are slow to fade. Even a compliment isn't a tribute if it puts a woman in "her" place.

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
balls (eg. "She's/he's got balls")	guts, moxie
bridesmaid	bridal attendant
father time	time
kingdom	country, land, realm
kingdom come	the next world, paradise
kingmaker	power behind the throne
kingpin	linchpin, cornerstone
lady killer	seducer, popular with the women
ladylike	courteous, cultured
lady luck	luck, good fortune
like a man	resolutely, bravely
maiden name	birth name
maiden voyage	first voyage
man (verb)	staff, run, operate
man enough	strong enough
manhood, womanhood	adulthood
manly	strong, mature
man-made	artificial, synthetic, machine-made
man of action	dynamo
man of letters	scholar, author, intellectual
man of the world	sophisticate

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
man-hours	staff-hours, person-hours, hours of work
manpower	staff, personnel, workforce
man-sized	big, heavy
man-to-man talk	heart-to-heart talk
matronly	mature, dignified
mother nature	nature
one-upmanship	upstaging, competitiveness
sexpot, sex kitten	avoid
Renaissance man	Renaissance person
statesman	diplomat, politician
tough guy	tough (noun)
woman's intuition	intuition
workmanlike	diligent, skillful, careful
workmanship	craft, skill, artisanship, quality construction
yeoman's service	heroic service, loyal service, service beyond the call of duty

Turns of Phrase

Quotations and turns of phrase provide some special challenges for the gender-inclusive writer. You can't go back and rewrite quotations or titles of books, songs and plays. Here the columnist for the Toronto entertainment weekly, the *Eye*, in an attempt at humor, took our suggestions just a touch too literally when he changed Shakespeare's play title *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *The Two Humans of Verona*.

While accuracy in using correct titles and quotations is a must, you can be aware that quotations relying on stereotypes may no longer prove the point you want to make. There are many turns of phrase and expressions that have developed over time which are flexible, and can keep their color when reworked. Here are a few:

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
All men are created equal.	All people are created equal.
be his own man	be one's own person
best man for the job	best person for the job
Boys will be boys.	Kids will be kids.
Dead men tell no tales.	The dead tell no tales.
everybody and his brother	everybody and their cousin, all the world and their dog
Every man for himself	Everyone for themselves
Every man has his price.	Everyone has their price. We all have our price.
A fool and his money are soon parted.	Fools and their money are soon parted.
John Q. Public	the average citizen
Every schoolboy knows.	Every schoolchild knows.
gentleman's agreement	honourable agreement, informal agreement
Man does not live by bread alone.	People don't live by bread alone.
A man's home is his castle.	Your home is your castle.
man of few words	person of few words; strong, silent type
no-man's-land	dead zone, unclaimed territory

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
to a man	to a one, to a person, without exception
The way to a man's heart is through his stomach.	The way to the heart is through the stomach.

Putdowns

Everyone knows that terms like "bimbo" or "vamp" are more than stereotypes -- they're insults. But unintended insults can also creep into day-to-day language through terms we take for granted, putting down both men and women.

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
bad guy	villain, rogue
bag lady	street person
bag man (political)	go-between, fixer, shark
con man	con artist
fall guy	scapegoat, chump, dupe
girl (except for a child)	avoid
henpecked	avoid
mama's boy	avoid
manhandle	abuse, mistreat
nervous Nellie	worrywart, worrier
mother hen	busybody, fussbudget
old maid	single woman or avoid
old wives' tale	myth, folktale
plain Jane	avoid
prodigal son	prodigal child
sissy	avoid

Non-inclusive	*Inclusive*
sob sister	advice columnist, bleeding heart
spinster	single woman
tomboy	rough and tumble child
tomfoolery	shenanigans, monkey business
weak sister	weak link in the chain
yes man	toady, hanger-on, sycophant

LANGUAGE on THE MOVE

Some Significant Breakthroughs

1972

"Ms." makes its first dictionary appearance in *The American Heritage School Dictionary.*

1976

Dr. Benjamin Spock revises his classic *Baby and Child Care* using gender-neutral language.

1978

The federal Manpower and Immigration and Unemployment Commission becomes Employment and Immigration Canada.

1979

Quebec women legally keep their birth names after marriage, unless they apply for a name change.

CBC adopts code to fight sexual stereotyping on air.

1981

Women successfully lobby for use of the word "person" throughout the Charter of Rights.

1983

The University of Waterloo eliminates biased language from calendars, policies and forms.

St. Jerome's College, part of UW, later changes the name of its alumni association to "the graduates' association."

1986

The National Museum of Man/Musée national de l'homme becomes the National Museum of Civilization/ Musée national des civilisations (later changed to the Canadian Museum of Civilization/Musée canadien des civilisations).

1988

Toronto City Council votes to replace term "alderman" with "councillor."

1990

Toronto Transit Commission rejects beer ad depicting a woman as a "fox."

1992

Media office for Canadian Olympic team provides guidelines on bias-free sports reporting.

WOMEN SPEAK UP about SEX-BIASED LANGUAGE

...at work

"Because I use my initials on all my correspondence, I get lots of letters addressing me as 'Mr.' I circle 'Mr.' and send them back unopened. Those people always call me with abject apologies."

...at home

"With two sons 12 and 9, I have boys running through the house all weekend. The worst insult they can hurl at each other is 'You're a girl.' It affects me like a punch in the stomach, so I always tell the kids that their language offends me. My sons roll their eyes, but they no longer use 'girl' as a term of abuse."

...on the phone

"I'm a psychologist. When I make a phone call and identify myself as 'Dr. Caplan,' I can't tell you how often I'm mistaken for a secretary. The usual response is, 'What does he want?' I don't let it go by anymore -- it's too demeaning. I always ask, 'Do you think only men can have doctorates?' "

...in meetings

"I'm the vice-chair of a large volunteer board. The last time our executive had a working lunch together, a 20-year-old waiter asked us, 'Which one of you men should I give the bill to?' It was as if I'd disappeared -- and I was one of the

senior people there. I told the waiter, very firmly, 'None of them. Please give it to the woman.' "

...at the corner store

"My grocer calls all his female customers 'young lady,' even the ones in their sixties. I've told him nicely that I don't consider it a compliment, but he just won't stop. One of these days, I'm going to call him 'young man.' "

...at fundraisers

"I just attended a charity brunch. The speaker was a prominent physician who happens to be a woman. After the emcee told us about her grants and studies and awards, he added, to everyone's horror, 'On top of all that, she's got great legs.' A hiss went through the room."

...on university campuses

"I felt excluded when my political science professor kept talking about 'the nature of man.' One day in class, I asked her why she didn't say 'human' nature instead. She didn't take me seriously. In every essay I wrote for her, we had battles over language. I'd write 'humankind'; she'd change it to 'mankind.' I'd use a plural; she'd change it to 'he.' Finally I complained to the head of the department. Now political science is the only department on campus that has guidelines on gender-neutral language."

CRACKING DOWN on BIAS:

Insiders share their strategies

Ruth Haehnal,
Editor, *The Service Report*

"Because my partner and I are women, we take pains to avoid stereotypes in our newsletter. If we run an article on bank tellers, we'll make sure that one of the tellers is male. When we write about managers, we feature women prominently."

Rhoda Beecher,
Director of Human Resources, Toronto Hydro

"You have to talk to people, or they won't buy in. When we first tried to use gender-neutral language in a collective agreement, we faced a tremendous backlash. Men were saying, 'I'm not a meter reader, I'm a meter man.' We traded lists of terms with the union so they'd have some ownership of the issue. In a blue-collar work force, men tend to identify themselves by what they do."

Jane Davidson,
Senior Public Relations Specialist,
DuPont Canada Inc.

"When I prepare the annual report, I make sure women are represented in the photographs. This year I had a reshoot done because the photographer shot only white males. Like other companies, we've had budget cutbacks, but I had the full support of the senior VP of finance. One of the

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slogans around here is 'diversity'-- capturing the variety of people who work for the company."

Janet Thomson,
Senior Producer, CBC TV's *Street Cents*

"We needed a voiceover for a show that was seen through the point of view of our mascot, a pig. The men on the show only wanted to audition male voices. They thought a male voice would be more recognizable as a pig because most of the animals in cartoons have gruff male voices. When I pointed out that our pig was female, I got a lot of resistance. Then I asked them, 'If the pig was male, would we only audition female voices?' That did it. We used a female voice."

Dave Henderson,
Manager, Technical Services,
The Ontario Home Builders' Association

"Our consumer guides use the terms 'tradesperson' and 'contractor.' We also alternate 'he' and 'she' in reference to contractors. The construction industry is changing and we are now seeing greater numbers of women in construction. It wasn't a conscious decision to use gender-neutral language in our guides, but it is the logical choice. We are also trying to encourage both men and women to consider the construction industry as a possible career option."

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WORD BUFFS, TAKE NOTE

These words all have one thing in common: they're used to put women down. But it wasn't always so. A few centuries back, some were used of both sexes and others had positive meanings. It seems that the moral of the story is nothing taints a word like association with women.

- bluestocking --
  referred to the plain clothing worn by both sexes at the literary salons of the 1750s. Later applied exclusively to the women, whose intellectual interests were considered beyond them.

- courtesan --
  meant the member of a pope's or prince's court until the late sixteenth century. Applied specifically to female prostitutes when Protestant England turned against the pope.

- flibbertigibbet --
  a chattering gossip of either sex until the nineteenth century, when it became female-specific. Has implied silliness ever since.

- frigid --
  a cold, formal person of either sex until the 1920s. But this term is now used almost exclusively as a put-down of women.

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- hooker --
  in the sixteenth century, a pilferer, knave or rogue. Applied to women alone since the middle of the nineteenth century.

- tomboy --
  originally a rude, boisterous boy; later a promiscuous woman (sixteenth century). Applied to girls who behave "like boys" since the 1870s.

- vamp --
  from the same root as vampire. Originally a ruthless predator of either sex. Redefined as female during the promotion of a 1915 silent movie starring Theda Bara.

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SUGGESTED *READING*

Canadian National. *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Nonsexist Communication*. Available in French as *Les uns et les unes: guide pour une communication non sexiste*. Montreal: 1988.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans. *How to Avoid Sexism in Communications*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, 1987. (Practical, 14-page pamphlet for business readers.)

King, Ruth, et al. *Talking Gender: A Guide to Nonsexist Communication*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman Ltd., 1991. (Covers both French and English. Includes a chapter on visual images.)

Maggio, Rosalie. *The Nonsexist Word Finder: A Dictionary of Gender-Free Usage*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. (Origins and alternatives for more than 5,000 entries.)

Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. *Handbook of Nonsexist Writing: For Writers, Editors and Speakers*. Second Edition. New York: Harper Collins, 1988. (Common-sense tips with a wealth of real-life examples.)

Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. *Words and Women: New Language in New Times*. Updated. New York: Harper Collins, 1991. (Classic overview blends theory and advice.)

Mills, Jane. *Womanwords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Patriarchal Society*. Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1989. (Lively history of 300 words, from actress to womb, shows how social context shapes meaning.)

National Watch on Images of Women in the Media (Mediawatch) Inc. *Sex-role Stereotyping: A Content Analysis of Radio and Television Programs and Advertisements*. Vancouver: 1987.

Sorels, Bobbye D. *The Nonsexist Communicator: Solving the Problems of Gender and Awkwardness in Modern English*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983. (Stands out for tips on oral and nonverbal communication.)

Spender, Dale. *Man Made Language*. Second edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. (The theory behind the move for bias-free language.)

Sport Canada. *Words to Watch: Guidelines for Non-Sexist Sport Commentary*. Ottawa: 1992.

Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Morrow, 1990. (Popular treatment of gender-based differences in communication style.)

NOTES

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